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HER MAJESTY, THE QUEEN.

THE CHARACTER OF QUEEN VICTORIA.

THE death of the most illustrious of the recent sovereigns of the world has been followed by an outburst of respectful eulogy, not merely from her own subjects, whose pride, no less than their affection, was concerned in the matter, but also from independent observers in all countries, even in those which are, by old habit or recent prejudice, hostile to British institutions, and to the rulers of our Empire. It has been gratifying to us to feel that the virtues of Queen Victoria rose so high above all international jealousies as to command veneration even when it must have been grudgingly accorded. In all the nations—but particularly, it should in justice be said, in France and in America—that ugly habit of scolding, from which we ourselves cannot pretend that we are free, gave place, at least momentarily, to a respectful and sympathetic appreciation, for which, unused as we are to these amenities, we can hardly

be too grateful. This was a very striking tribute to the person of the late Queen, and one which, when we reflect upon it, must have arisen more from a correct general estimate than from any very exact knowledge. The character of Her Majesty was very widely divined; it cannot with truth be said to have been very precisely known. The fierce light which beats upon a throne has two effects, the one of which is more commonly perceived than the other. It throws up, indeed, into brilliant prominence, certain public features of the character, but none the less it produces a dazzlement, a glare of glory, in the flood of which it is not easy to analyse with exactitude the component parts out of which that character is formed.

For a little while after the death of a person for whom a semi-religious admiration has been felt, the blaze of reverence continues. It takes some time for the bewildering radiance to die down, and to leave the majestic potentate in the common light of man. But this regression to the mortal state is inevitable, and it occurs not merely in the moral and religious sense which has always impressed the Bossuets of the pulpit. It occurs in

the natural order of history; and it is when it has done its worst, and the solitude is most blank around a royal coffin, that we begin to see what the robes and pageantry concealed. Was it a human being at all? Was it worthy of the idolatry it awakened? How much of the worship was paid to a woman, and how much to a fetish? In the utterances of a loyal and justly emotional press, we have heard the last and least-measured accents of a praise that was too closely allied with pain and grief to analyse or to discriminate. But reason tells us that this cannot last. It tells us that Queen Victoria must, in her turn, take her place among all the other great preceding figures, who are judged not as what they seemed to be, but as what they were. It appears to us that the time has come to begin to abandon the note of purely indiscriminate praise, and to put even this revered personage into the crucible of criticism—to endeavour, in other words, to note, without any blind or sycophantic laudation, what were the elements, and what the evolution of her character. We can try to do so with the more perfect serenity, seeing that by such treatment it has scarcely anything to

lose, and, to the undazzled mind, not a little to gain.

The theories of heredity are not encouraged by any study of the temperament of the late Queen. There was little of her father or of her mother that could be discerned in the constitution of her mind. On the paternal side, in particular, although some traits which were really habits have been held to resemble those of, for instance, George III, Victoria offered few or none of the characteristics of her Hanoverian forbears. But in no instance could it be more plainly laid down that while, as we know, poets are born and not made, sovereigns, on the contrary, are rather made than born. Highly exceptional conditions combined to mould the youthful spirit of the Queen into the composite and elaborate mechanism which it became. It has been customary to say that she was unique, and this is in measure true; but if by this phrase it is meant to be inferred that she was born with an irresistible trend towards personal greatness, like a Napoleon, or a Darwin, or a Hugo, it appears to be wholly incorrect. The daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Kent was born, we seem to see, a rather

ordinary mortal, with fine instincts, considerable mental capacity, and a certain vital persistence which was to serve her well. These qualities, not in themselves very unusual, were, however, educated by circumstances which made the very most of them, and, in particular, which enabled them to provide a basis upon which rare excellence could be built up.

The first fact, in short, which we are required to recognise if we wish to comprehend the character of Queen Victoria, is that it was, to an unusual degree, a composite one. It was not brilliantly full at some points and void at others; it had no strong lights and shades. It presented to the observer a kind of mosaic, smoothed and harmonised by circumstances into a marvellously even surface. There was no one element in her mind which would certainly, in other and untoward conditions, have made itself prominently felt. It was this, indeed, which constituted the very essence of her originality, her completeness on so many sides, her marvellous unity and efficiency, the broad, polished surface which she presented to all the innumerable difficulties which beset her path in life.

It might be hazarded, as a paradox, that her originality lay in her very lack of originality, in the absence of salient eccentricity. Her character was built up of elements which are usually antagonistic, but which in her case were so nicely balanced that they held one another in check, and facilitated, instead of embarrassing, that directness of purpose and instinct for going straight to the mark, which were indispensable to success in her sovereign career.

We speak for the moment of the Queen's character, not as it had been in earlier and more tentative years, but as it has revealed itself, since the death of the Prince Consort, to those who have publicly or privately been brought into relations with her. There are none now living who have known this composite mind of hers in any other condition than completed. The Lützens and the Melbournes did something to prepare the surface of it; they helped to fit the pieces into the tessellated floor. But in the memory of living man it has never presented any but a finished appearance. The originality of it, as it has presented itself in recent times, was discovered, when it was

closely studied, to be formed of a singular conjunction of shrewdness, simplicity, and sympathy. It will be found, we think, that it was upon a kaleidoscopic combination of these qualities in ever-varying proportions that almost every characteristic act of Queen Victoria was based. Montaigne understood how, in the case of persons fenced in from the combat of life, each little impact lays its stamp on some facet of character. *Chaque parcelle,* as he might have put it, of the temperament of the late Queen was the result of some pressure from these her three cardinal qualities.

Her discriminating shrewdness was at once an invaluable gift and a dangerous weapon. There is no question that it had more than anything else to do with her prolonged success as a politician. It is not difficult to see that it might have proved a peril to her. She early recognised that indulgence in it might lead her astray in the direction of obstinate prejudice, and she was always on her guard against its vagaries. No one that knew her late Majesty well will be inclined to deny that her extraordinary pertinacity, her ingrained inability to drop an

idea which she had fairly seized, might naturally have developed into obstinacy. By nature she certainly was what could only be called obstinate, but the extraordinary number of opposite objects upon which her will was incessantly exercised saved her from the consequences of this defeat. She was obliged to cultivate her powers of discrimination, and to introduce into her action that element of deliberate and conscious choice which is fatal to the blind indulgence of prejudice. The habit of suspending her judgment, in other words, prevented her from ever resting too absolutely on one order of ideas. The old Pythagorean tag tells us that adversity is the touch-stone of character. In the case of Queen Victoria the same effect was produced by the isolation of extreme prosperity.

It followed that her will, so trained and fortified, usually kept the Queen on a high plane of action. She was actuated by an extraordinary singleness of purpose, from which, however, it was only human nature that she should sometimes descend. It was in these moments of moral relaxation that she was exposed to the danger of yielding to prejudice, for in these conditions ob-

stinacy, in the true sense, would take hold of her. Conscious as she was of the vast round of duties in which she had to move and take her part, she was sensitive about the quantity of time and thought demanded of her from any one point. Hence, if she thought one of her ministers was not thoughtful in sparing her unneeessary work, she would with difficulty be induced to believe that his demands were ever essential. She would always be suspecting him of trying to overwork her. Her prejudice against Mr. Gladstone, about which so many fables were related and so many theories formed, really started in her consciousness that he would never acknowledge that she was, as she put it, 'dead beat.' In his eagerness Mr. Gladstone tried to press her to do what she knew, with her greater experience, to be not her work so much as his, and she resented the effort. He did it again, and she formed one of her pertinacious prejudices. The surface of her mind had received an impression unfavourable to the approach of this particular minister, and nothing could ever in future make her really pleased to welcome him.

In daily life, too, the inherent obstinacy, not

checked by the high instinct of public duty, would often make itself felt. The Queen was fond of a very regular and symmetrical order of life. In this she showed her great instinct for business, since her hours had to be filled and divided with as rigid a precision as those of a great general or the manager of a vast commercial enterprise. But the habit of regulating all the movements of life necessitated the fixture of innumerable minute rules of domestic arrangement. The Queen displayed an amazing quickness in perceiving the infraction of any of these small laws, and she did not realise how harassing some of them were to those who suffered from their want of elasticity. There they were, settled once and for ever. In small things as in great, the Queen never believed that she was or could be wrong on a matter of principle. This was an immense advantage to her; in great matters it was an advantage the importance of which, in steadying her will, could hardly be over-estimated; but of course in little things it was sometimes apt to become what is colloquially called 'trying.' Again, since it is in moments of physical weakness that the joints in every suit of

human armour discover themselves, so, when the Queen was poorly or exhausted, those around her were made to feel how, with less self-control, she might have appeared arbitrary. She would be cross for no reason; she would contest a point, and close the argument without further discussion. At these moments those who knew her best could realise what a merciful thing it was for her own happiness that the immensity of the field of her actions and her decisions forcibly kept her mind upon the very high plane which was its habitual station.

To form an accurate opinion of human beings who were presented to her attention was so important a part of her whole function as a sovereign that it took a foremost part in her intellectual exercise. She was thoroughly convinced of the importance of being correct in her reading of character, and she devoted her full powers to it. In her inspection of a strange minister or a newly appointed member of her household, she had a method well understood by those who observed her narrowly. She received the unfamiliar person with a look of suspended judgment in her face. Her

eyes and her mouth took on their investigating aspect. She could be seen to be making up her mind almost as though it were a watch which had to be wound up. If the analysis was easy, and the result of it satisfactory, the features would relax; a certain curious look of amenity would pass across her face. But if the presented type was complex or difficult, those who knew the Queen extremely well would perceive that her mind was not made up after all. The lines of the mouth would continue to be a little drawn down; the eyes, like sentinels, would still be alert under eyebrows faintly arched. But sooner or later she would succeed in her analysis, and an almost unbroken line of examples served to give her a justified faith in her acumen. She was scarcely ever wrong, and she was slow to admit a mistake. The judgment formed in that cool period of suspended observation, of which we have spoken, she was content to abide by; she defined the personage after her own acute fashion, and such as she had seen him first so she continued to see him.

This sureness of judgment was veiled by a simplicity and an absence of self-consciousness which

took away from it the most formidable part of such an ordeal. Often, doubtless, the humorous look of indecision which preceded the Queen's inner summing-up, must greatly have baffled the victim of her analysis. 'What is Her Majesty thinking about?' he might say to himself, but never with a sense of real discomfort, because of the Queen's complete freedom from anything like personal vanity. This was once exemplified in the case of a public man presented to her for the first time. Something was said about his opinion of the Queen. 'Dear me,' she said, 'I did not give a thought to that. It is so beside the question. What really signifies is what I think of him.' If this initial examination was embarrassing to a timid person, no one was so quick as she Queen to observe the result and to mitigate any outward sign of its cause. Then all her kindliness would assert itself. To the awkwardness of real modesty no one in her court was so indulgent as herself. Once when a man who was presented to her had been so particularly clumsy that his efforts were afterwards smiled at, the Queen reproved the merriment. 'He was shy,' she said,

'and I know well what that is, for sometimes I am very shy myself.' The most serene and dignified of women to external observation, it is possible that indeed Queen Victoria had a little secret core of timidity, for she was rather fond of confessing, with a smile, to a 'stupid feeling of shyness,' especially if that confession could make another person comfortable.

Perhaps it should be noted that there was one result of the Queen's studied habit of suspending her judgment which was not entirely convenient. She feared to commit herself; and sometimes her cryptic phrases, short and vague, with the drawn lips and the investigating eyes, fairly baffled her ministers. They put before her State conundrums to which she was not prepared to give an immediate answer; and she puzzled them to divine what she had on her mind. She left them in their uncertainty, and sent them away bewildered. It would perhaps have been convenient if, in these cases, she would have deigned to admit that she was herself undetermined.

We have said that when once she had formed a deliberate judgment with regard to a person, it

was difficult to induce her to revise it. But her innate and yet carefully cultivated kindliness tempered the severity of a harsh decision. She would moderate her condemnation; she would dwell upon some pleasant trait in a character not otherwise to her fancy. There can be no doubt that she was aware that her view of others, shrewd as it always was and astonishingly close to the truth as it would often be, was not infallible. Those who watched her could almost see her hold her severity in check, draw herself together lest she should be tempted to be severe, to forget that her first duty was to be quite just. She was, however, very impatient of dulness and of want of instinctive perception. This was, perhaps, where she was least inclined to be indulgent. It would be respectfully urged that some lady who was out of favour was 'a nice kind woman.' 'Yes,' the Queen would reply, 'but I've no patience with her, she's so stupid.' This was not out of any kind of intellectual arrogance, but because stupidity, in relation to herself and the business of the court, was rust on the axle of the coach of state. It was necessary that all things about the Queen should

be lubricated with the practical emollient of common-sense and alertness.

Those who were much with her were never allowed to forget that she was the most important person in the room. Without the least emphasis, or need for emphasis, her character imposed itself on her surroundings. It was part of her real importance in great things that she was obliged to be a little tyrannical in small things. After all, it was essential that the court and the country should continue to move; and in order to do this properly, they must revolve smoothly around herself. No doubt, in a degree which she would scarcely have admitted in her secret thought, she was always conscious of this. If any one had ventured to put this into words and to submit it to her, she would unquestionably have acquiesced in it. It was not personal vanity; it was a proper acceptance of her inborn station in the general social system. Oddly enough, though she bore her imperial greatness with such perfect ease and modest assurance, she sometimes displayed a certain love of the exercise of power, for its own sake, in little things. It might almost be said that, feeling decision to be of

memory of it is lost, the exquisite manner of Queen Victoria. This was the characteristic in her which grew most definitely out of her training and surroundings. It was made up of what she had learned as a child from Baroness Lützen, as a girl from *grands seigneurs* who gently guided her first unpractised footsteps in public affairs, as a young matron from the Prince Consort. Probably we should be right in attributing the most striking parts of it to the second of these classes on influence, and especially to the admiration she had felt for the experience of life and the stately *tenue* of Lord Melbourne and of Lord Conyngham. These men belonged in measure to the tradition of the eighteenth century; they could recall the time when people wore perukes, and long silk waistcoats, and entered drawing-rooms delicately, with the *chapeau-bras* pressed between the palms of their hands as they bowed. It was a very curious chance which ordained that the earliest guides of the youthful Queen should be men of mature age extremely conservative in manner and bearing, carrying about with them an elaborateness of conduct which

was already, sixty years ago, beginning to be antiquated.

The consequence was that the Queen, carefully preserving this tradition as she did, and perpetuating it by her august example, retained not a little of the air of a bygone age. Without pedantry, her scheme of manner was distinctly more *vieille-cour* than that of any one else in Europe. In itself beautifully finished, it offered positively an antiquarian interest. But people who saw her seldom, or who were not accustomed to differentiate, made a mistake in speaking of 'the Queen's beautiful manners.' She had no 'manners' at all in the self-conscious or artificia lsense. Her charm was made up of spontaneous kindliness and freedom from all embarrassment, built upon this eighteenth-century style or manner which she set herself to have good 'manners,' but begreat lady of 1790 might have acted, not because she set herself to have good 'manners,' but because that was how great ladies, trained as she had been trained, naturally behaved, with a perfect grace based upon unsuspecting simplicity. What was inherent nature in her manner struck recent

beholders with amazement as conscious art; but what deceived them was a survival of the stateliness of the eighteenth century.

Her 'manner' was greatly aided by a trait so unusual and so strongly marked that no sketch of her character could be considered complete which failed to dwell upon it. It was perhaps the most salient of all her native, as distinguished from her acquired, characteristics. This was her strongly defined dramatic instinct. Queen Victoria possessed, to a degree shared with her by certain distinguished actors only, the genius of movement. It is difficult to know to what she owed this. From the accounts preserved of her earliest girlish appearances, it would look as though it had been innate. She certainly possessed it in full force as far back as human memory now extends. What we mean by her instinct for movement may perhaps be made apparent by the use of a homely phrase—she was never flurried by a space in front of her. How rare this is, even among the most august of every nation, only those who have had some observation of courts can know. The most experienced princes and princesses hesitate to 'take

the stage,' to cross alone, without haste and without hesitation, over a clear floor, just so far as is exactly harmonious and suitable. The most hardened are apt to shrink and sidle, to appeal mutely for help. These movements never gave Queen Victoria a moment's inquietude. She knew by divination exactly where, and exactly how, and exactly how far to advance; how to pause, and how to turn, and how to return were mysteries which never bewildered her in the slightest. When the Czar Alexander II was here in 1874, the Russian court was astonished at the easy and unconscious dignity with which the Queen would walk straight over to some obscure person, and enter gracefully into conversation with him. That so much stateliness could be combined with so unconscious a simplicity was the subject of their continual amazement.

Something more must be said about this habit of the Queen. Her movements on these occasions were never made without a purpose. It was not her custom to go directly to a personage of the first importance who had just been brought within her circle. She made it a practice to be well-in-

formed, and she greatly disliked being put at a conversational disadvantage. She would therefore walk over to a man or woman of less prestige, and obtain from him or her the information she required about the ultimate object of her inquiry. But it would often happen that in the course of this auxiliary interview the Queen's sympathy and interest would be arrested; and while she was collecting facts about the third person, her attention would be drawn away to the individual from whom she was receiving the information. Hence the court was often amused, and those who had but a superficial knowledge of the Queen were surprised, to see her, at a formal reception, linger long in apparently confidential exchange of ideas with one of the least important people in the room. Of course the person so distinguished was enchanted, and the Queen had made another friend for life, and one whom she would never forget. Then she would serenely resume her turn round the room, entirely unembarrassed, greatly interested in each fresh mind that was presented to her. These were occasions of singular interest to the student of her character, who would try, but try in vain, to de-

cipher the inscrutable look in her face. It is impossible to conceive a social function more distressingly set about with snares for an unwary footstep. But the Queen was trammelled by no *bourgeois* fear of not doing the right thing. She trusted to the unfailing nicety of her famous dramatic instinct.

There are still a few who recollect her demeanour when she went to Paris to greet the Emperor and Empress of the French in 1855. She was not known in France; Parisian society had not made up its mind whether it meant to like her or not. Her tiny figure disconcerted the critics, and somebody quoted Émile Deschamps, 'La reine Mab nous a visité.' Paris decided at first sight that it did not like her English dress, and was frigid to her 'want of style.' But within a week Paris was at the feet of the little great lady. Her conquest of France happened at the gala performances at the Opera. Everybody was watching for the sovereigns, and the moment was highly critical. The Empress was looking magnificent, a dream of silken splendor; the Queen, as ever, somewhat disdainful of her clothes, had made no effort to shine.

But when the party arrived at the box of the Opera, her innate genius for movement inspired her. The Empress of the French, fussing about her women, loitered at the door of the box; the Queen of England walked straight to the front, waiting for no help and anxious for no attendance. She stood there alone for a moment, surveying the vast concourse of society, and then she slowly bowed on every side, with a smile which the most consummate actress might envy.

This was a great moment, and the way in which it struck the French was extraordinary. 'La reine Mab' become from that day forth the idol of Parisian society, and 'the way she did it,' the consummate skill of the thing, was celebrated everywhere by the amateurs of deportment. She was never embarrassed; if a question could possibly be raised about etiquette, she would say, 'What dos it matter?' She felt herself to be a law-giver on all such questions. In the same connexion, her behaviour to the Empress of the French was a model of good style. The Empress Eugénie was at that time one of the most exquisite human beings in Europe, while Queen Victoria was not,

and knew that she was not, what is understood by 'pretty.' But she was frankly and simply charmed with the admiration which the beauty of the Empress awakened wherever the sovereigns went; she shared this admiration, and it never crossed her mind to resent the expression of it. She would as soon have been piqued at the effect caused by a gorgeous sunset or by a tropical flower. Her admiration was returned on other grounds; the Empress Eugénie's visits became a pleasure which the Queen always looked forward to. The manner of each of them to the other was perfect, and the friendship between the two ladies, begun nearly fifty years ago, ended only with the life of the Queen.

Queen Victoria was unique in combining simple and unconscious dignity with a distinct theatrical instinct. She was unrivalled in her sense of the proper *mise en scène* of a formal ceremonial. When her chamberlains were at a loss to see by the light of nature how a court function should be arranged, at the last moment there was always the resource of appealing to the Queen. This dramatic imagination of hers made her a formidable

critic of manners and in particular of attitude. It was no matter of doubt with her how this, that, or the other should be said or handled; she knew at once, infallibly, what was the one right way. Hence she was sometimes, as it appeared to laxer disciplinarians, rather severe on ugly manners; sh used to complain that so-and-so had 'such an uncomfortable way of behaving.' It jarred upon her nerves; it was a discord which the perfect rightness of her own instinct made it difficult for her to comprehend. But she never showed the discomfort which she felt. Her command over her face was absolute, and only those who knew her very intimately could detect the slight tightening of the lips and concentrated expression of the eyes which showed her sense of annoyance.

Queen Victoria's genius for movement was born with her, and not inherited. She certainly did not receive it from the excellent Duchess of Kent. She attributed something of her perfect ease to the early training of a French dancing-mistress, but it was certainly innate. Although the drama was that branch of the fine arts in which she took the greatest interest, she herself never acted in the

private theatricals which were so prominent a part of the court life at one time. She was not, perhaps, a careful student of drama itself, from the literary point of view; it was the scenic effect, and in particular, the elements of scenic attitude and movement, which occupied her attention. When she attended the theatre, which she loved, she always commented on any lack of propriety in action; and, on the other hand, the presence of this quality attracted her strong approval. It is recollected that she placed Grisi on a higher level than all other operatic performers in this respect. When that actress flung herself across the door in 'The Huguenots,' or arranged the poison scene with the Duke in 'Lucrezia Borgia,' and when Viardot Garcia rose to the height of her invective in the 'Prophète,' the Queen's face blazed with approbation. She would turn in her box and say, 'There! not one of the others could do that, no, not even Alboni!' At the private plays at court, she was always an acute observer, and, when she consented to advise, a superlatively practical stage-manager; while, when professional companies came down to act before her—an event to which she

dictatorial. This tolerance, too, was to be read in her smile, a cautious suspension of judgment, a faintly humorous and intentional ambiguity. Her smile, in fact, was the key, for those who knew how to turn it, to the secrets of the Queen's character.

In the intimacy of home life, and particularly when the discipline of her household was relaxed at Balmoral or at Osborne, the Queen gave way without restraint to her very quick and rich sense of humor. If those of her ladies who have seen her at the little purely feminine dinners in Scotland or at Mentone would but speak, they could give us charming studies of Her Majesty in the *allegro* vein. The jests in which the Queen delighted were not of the very subtle kind. But a rather primitive kind of fun, when she was in the mood for it, would amuse her almost beyond her own endurance, till she was simply breathless and could bear no more. Her rather prominent blue eyes would positively beam with entertainment. Sometimes she was taken, and at very awkward moments, with what the French so aptly term *le fou rire*. She had no very cautious sense of the proper range of jokes, and has been known to pass them on with

an extraordinary rashness. A very charming element in her humor, when it was less exuberant, was a certain kindly shyness, as though she were not quite sure of being met half way, and yet believed that she would be, and, at all events, would venture.

Although so given to perceive the risible side of things, and, therefore, unprotected against laughter, the Queen could, when it was necessary, perform feats of endurance. On one occasion an embassy from a leading Oriental power, never represented at our court before, was to be received for the first time. The event was of some importance, and the reception very ceremonious. The English court, however, had not been prepared for the appearance or the language or the formalities of the envoys. From the very opening of the scene, there was something inconceivably funny about everything that happened. When, at last, the ambassadors suddenly bowed themselves, apparently as men struggling with acute internal pain, and squeezed their hands together in passionate deprecation between their knees, the English court quivered with merriment like aspen-leaves. The

Queen alone remained absolutely grave. If anything betrayed emotion, it was a deepened color and a more intense solemnity. The envoys withdrew at last, with salaams the most exquisite imaginable, and then, but not till then, the Queen broke down, saying, through her sobs of mirth, 'But I went through it, I did go right through it!'

The Queen made no pretension to smartness of speech, yet she could often surprise those who talked with her by her wit. It consisted, to a great degree—as, indeed, most wit does—in a rapid movement of the speaker's mind, which dived suddenly and reappeared at an unexpected place. Her sincerity led her to a quaintness of wording which was often very entertaining. One instance of this, among many which rise to the memory, may be given here. A piece of very modern music had been performed in the Queen's presence, manifestly not to her approval. 'What is that?' she asked. 'It's a drinking song. Madam, by Rubinstein.' 'Nonsense,' said the Queen; 'no such thing! Why, you could not drink a cup of tea to *that!*'

Her sense of humor was that of a strong and healthy person. It was a natural outcome of the

breadth of her normal and wholesome humanity. That she had a very remarkable fund of nervous strength follows as a matter of course on the record of what she was and what she lived to do. Her courage was one of the personal qualities of which her subjects were most properly convinced; they knew her to have a royal disdain of fear. One of the little incidents, hardly noted at the time, and soon forgotten, which deserve to be revived, was connected with the attack made upon her in 1850 by Robert Pate, who struck her across the face with a cane. She was on her way home from her afternoon drive, when, just as the carriage turned into the archway on Constitution Hill, the assault was made. She was announced to appear at the Opera that evening, and her frightened ladies said that of course she would stay at home. 'Certainly not,' she replied. 'If I do not go, it will be thought that I am seriously hurt, and people will be distressed and alarmed.' 'But you are hurt, ma'am.' 'Very well, then every one shall see how little I mind it.' The usual orders were given, and at the proper hour she appeared in the theatre, where the news of the attack had preceded

she did not approve of long services, and would sometimes scandalize the minister by indicating, with uplifted fan, that the sermon was getting too lengthy. She said of one clergyman, 'I think he would do better if he did not look at me. He catches my eye, and then he cannot stop.' The Queen disapproved of proselytism in the court; she would allow no distribution of tracts, no propagation of fads and 'peculiar opinions.' There was no reason why there should be any sects, she thought, and no proof that modern people were any wiser about morals than their forefathers. She was a Broad Churchwoman, in the true sense, and her attitude towards dogmatic religion was a latitudinarian one, though perhaps she would have disliked it being defined in that way. In the old Tractarian days she felt a certain curiosity in the movement, but when Lady Canning tried to convert her to High Church views, the Queen was very angry. It rather set a mark in her mind against a person that he or she was a ritualist. It was always an element in her reticence with regard to Mr. Gladstone, that he was too High Church; 'I am afraid he has the mind of a Jesuit,'

she used to say. She liked Roman Catholics very much better than Anglican ritualists, partly because she had a respect for their antiquity, and partly because she was not the head of their Church, and so felt no responsibility about their opinions. She had foreign Roman Catholic friends with whom she sometimes spoke on religious matters with a good deal of freedom. Her knowledge of many phases of modern religious thought was rather vague; and when the creed of the Positivists was first brought to her notice, she was extremely interested. 'How very curious,' she said, 'and how very sad! What a pity somebody does not explain to them what a mistake they are making. But do tell me more about this strange M. Comte.'

The religious position of the Queen, as a human being, can be very simply defined. The old peasant at her cottage-door, spelling out a page of the Bible, was an image that particularly appealed to her. She was full of beautiful and perfectly simple devotional feelings; she was confident of the efficacy of prayer. She looked upon herself quite without disproportion, not as a Queen, but as an

aged woman who had been sorely tried by anxiety and bereavement, and by the burden of responsibility; but who had been happy enough to see through it all that it was the will of God, and to feel that that lightened the load. It was her cardinal maxim that all discomfort comes from resisting that will. To her parish-priests she always showed particular kindness; and some she honored with her confidence. Dean Wellesley, in many ways like-minded with herself, was long her trusted confidant. Nephew of the great Duke, he was a noble type of the enlightened statesman-priest, and he was the latest survival of all those men who were grouped around the Queen in her early youth. He exercised a paramount authority in matters of Church preferment, where the Queen never questioned his wisdom, for she had proved him to be raised above all sectarian prejudice by his remarkable elevation of character. Dean Wellesley was aware of the importance of his advice to the Queen, and he refused bishopric after bishopric from unwillingness to leave her. At his death, in 1882, she was deeply afflicted. No later chaplain could hope to exercise quite the same power as

Dean Wellesley; but Dr. Davidson (the present Bishop of Winchester), who, after a short interval, succeeded him in the Deanery, obtained in later years an influence closely resembling that of his predecessor. In the Established Church of Scotland, no minister received clearer marks of Her Majesty's favor, and none, it may be added, deserved them better, than Dr. Norman Macleod, whose elevated and lovable character, compounded of strength and tenderness, good sense, humour, and sympathy, was animated by a form of religion specially attractive to the Queen.

Perfect as she was in a regal and political aspect, filling more than adequately an astonishing number of offices, it was yet inevitable that there should be sides of life in which Queen Victoria was not inclined, or was not, let us boldly admit it, competent to take a leading part. Such shining qualities as hers could not but have their defects, and it is the poorest-spirited obsequiousness to pretend that they had not. No one brought a greater tact to the solution of the questions, What can I, and what can I not do? than did her late Majesty. When it came to her asking herself, Can

I be a leader of intellectual and æsthetic taste? she promptly decided that she could not, and she did not attempt the impossible task. It may be admissible to regret, or not to regret, that the Queen did not take the lead in the advancement of literature and art among her people. It may be a not insufficient answer, founded upon absolute common-sense, to say that she had, literally, not leisure enough to do everything, and that she very wisely diverted her attention from those subjects in which, as a leader, she might have failed. She had no time to fail; consequently, if there was the least doubt concerning her ability in any one direction, there it was useless to push on.

This was particularly the case in regard to literature. She saw a vast and growing work being performed by her subjects, and she did not feel that she was in touch with it. She accordingly left it alone, and had the wisdom not to attempt to patronise what she was not sure of comprehending. If we are content to examine her personal tastes and predilections, they were not brilliant, but they did no discredit to her understanding. She was naïve about the books she read, which were

mainly novels and travels. Walter Scott was her favourite author; but she had a great partiality for Jane Austen. The Prince Consort was an enthusiastic student of George Eliot, and he persuaded the Queen to read her books; she continued, perhaps partly for the Prince's sake, to express great admiration for them. The Queen had no real feeling for poetry, although she professed a cult for Tennyson, founded upon her emotional interest in his 'In Memoriam.' More modern authors received little attention from her; and the stories current of the Queen's particular interest in this or that recent writer may be dismissed as the fables of self-advertisement. She would sometimes begin a book, at the earnest request of one of her ladies, who would immediately write off to the author: 'I am happy to tell you that the Queen is now deep in your "Prodigies of Passion"'; but the correspondent would fail to mention that Her Majesty had tossed it away when she reached the fifth page. She would be very full of a book of information while she was studying it, would be riveted by particular anecdotes, and would quote them eagerly.

It could not with truth be said that her interest in art was much more acute. Here again, it was always her instinct that guided her rather than cultivated knowledge. She never took the right kind of interest in the beautiful objects she possessed in her palaces, and it is merely courtly complaisance to pretend that she did. In painting, two or three foreigners pleased her, and she rang the changes on their productions. In portraiture she greatly perferred likeness to artistic merit, and it was this that kept her from employing some of the great Englishmen of her reign. The Queen was entreated to sit to Mr. G. F. Watts, but in vain. When it was argued that he would produce a splendid painting, she would say: 'Perhaps so, but I am afraid it would be ugly.' Lady Canning at the time of the Pre-Raphaelite revival, tried very hard to lead the Queen's taste into fresh channels, and to woo it away from its cold German traditions; but she did not succeed. Frankly, the Queen did not care about art. She did not attempt to become acquainted with the leading English artists of her time. The only studio of a master that she ever visited was that of Leighton, whose

'Procession of Cimabue' the Prince Consort had bought for her, and whom she thought delightful, though perhaps more as an accomplished and highly agreeable courtier than as a painter.

Her attitude to music and to drama was much more interesting, though very simple. She had a sweet soprano voice, and had been trained by Costa to produce it prettily. She was very modest and even deprecatory about this accomplishment of hers, in which, however, she acquitted herself charmingly. Her favourite musician was Mendelssohn, who had greatly pleased her in early days as a man. She would have nothing to say, until quite late in life, to Wagner or Brahms, and once dismissed them all in one of her abrupt turns of conversation, 'Quite incomprehensible!' 'I'm bored with the Future altogether,' she used to say, 'and don't want to hear any more about it.' She was not more partial to some of the old masters, and once closed a musical discussion by saying, 'Handel always tires me, and I won't pretend he doesn't.' She carried out her aversion to the last, and forbade that the Dead March in 'Saul' should be played at her funeral.

At the play she must always have been a charming companion, her attention was so gaily awakened, her spirits so juvenile. She was fond of drama, even of melodrama, and let herself become the willing victim of every illusion. Sometimes she put on a little sprightly air of condescension to a companion presumably ignorant of stage affairs: 'Now listen, carefully. You think that woman is the housekeeper, but you wait and see.' And at the *dénouement,* the Queen was always triumphant: 'There! you didn't expect that, did you?' She thoroughly enjoyed a good farce, and laughed heartily at the jokes. She delighted in Italian opera, and when she liked a piece, she steeped herself in every part of it, the melody and the romance, and heard it over and over until she knew the music by heart. 'Norma' was a great favourite; and later years Calvé won her heart in 'Carmen,' to which opera—music, plot, and everything—the Queen became absolutely devoted. And the pieces of Gilbert and Sullivan were an endless delight to her; she would even take a part in these, very drolly and prettily. No one could form a more sympathetic audience, whether

in music or drama, than the Queen. She gave her unbroken attention to the performer, and followed whatever was being done with an almost childish eagerness. If the tenor began to be in the least heavy, the Queen would be observed to fidget, as though hardly restrained from breaking into song herself; and at the slightest deviation from perfection of delivery her fan began to move. No part of her character was more singularly interesting than the way in which, in such matters as these, she preserved a charm of juvenile freshness like an atmosphere surrounding the complex machinery of her mind.

One side of her development which must not escape consideration was that which made her, without rival, the leading woman of the world of her time. The way in which the Queen faced the society of Europe, or rather advanced at its head, through the greater part of her long life, was the result of a variety of influences, from within and from without. To follow these curiously would lead us too far, and we must confine ourselves to a consideration of certain definite effects upon the Queen's character. But before doing so, it may be

well to offer a few remarks with regard to the court which she formed around her, and which took the stamp of her personal tastes and temperament. To comprehend the constitution of the Victorian court, it must be recollected, first and foremost, that the Queen had an extreme respect for *tenue* in all its forms. When she was alone with her usual companions, nothing in the world could be more easy than she was in her deportment and conversation; but on anything approaching a state function utter rigidity was to be observed. This exterior stiffness, for which the English court became rather uncomfortably celebrated throughout Europe, was due, doubtless, in the first instance, to the tradition of Stockmar through the Prince Consort. When the Prince came to this country, there was an idea abroad that the court of Windsor was very much too free and easy. He early induced the Queen to take the same view, and with her remarkable tenacity of purpose she acted on those lines until the end. There were certain modifications, of course. Some people now living can recollect the intensely German evenings at Windsor, with their curious round of etiquette.

The Queen herself invented the convenient but embarrassing habit of having one person after another called up to converse with her. Meanwhile silence had to be maintained in the rest of the room, and the whole social effect was stilted to the last degree. The Royalties stood together on the rug in front of the fire, a station which none durst hold but they; and amusing incidents occurred in connection with this sacred object. When Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton first dined with the Queen, he strolled about the drawing-room afterwards so freely that Her Majesty whispered in agitation, 'If you don't do something to attract his attention, in another minute he'll be—on the rug.'

But although the rule of the court in these matters was so absolute, and its habits intensely conservative, the Queen's private manner was never affected by it, even on these stately occasions. Sometimes the court, on arriving in the drawing-room after dinner, would form a semi-circle around the Queen, and stand while she spoke to one after another. There was, of course, no other talk. When this ordeal was over, the Queen would take her flight to the sofa, where the Duchess of Kent

was already seated at a round table at her game of cards. The formality of the evening would then subside, and the Queen would be once more the charming easy companion with whom her ladies had gone sketching in the park in the morning.

The Queen was sometimes a little nervous lest people whom she did not know well should be tempted to take a liberty. Of course, as years rolled on, this became a more and more utterly incredible supposition, but in old years more than one dinner party at Windsor was spoiled by it. At the shadow, or less than the shadow, of an undue freedom, she would freeze, and, in all probability, not thaw again through the course of the dinner. She had a droll way of referring to these mischances, for which she had always the same formula; she used to say, 'I chose to have a headache last night. I am not quite sure that —— is discreet.' This was a favourite word with the Queen, and she used it in a variety of meanings. It meant well-bred, and it meant tactful; and it meant personally or instinctively agreeable to Her Majesty. It was rather a dreadful moment when she said that somebody was 'not discreet.' Her

favourite form of showing displeasure for want of discretion was to leave off asking the indiscreet person to dinner. The Queen invariably selected her own dinner list; and people who had unconsciously offended found out their error by not being asked for several successive nights. In process of time their sin would be pardoned, and the sign of it would be the reappearance of the name on the dinner list.

She had a very fine instinct for good breeding, but this did not prevent her from being sometimes a prey to vulgar toadies. People would enlist her sympathies for some decayed relation of their own, and the Queen would become violently interested. If, as not unfrequently was the case, the personage proved disappointing, she would often be exceedingly forbearing. 'Not very pretty manners, poor thing! Well, Well!' she would say, and that would be the end of it. On the whole, she did not resent this commonness of manner so much as she did lofty behaviour. She looked askance at pretentious people, and in this direction she was certainly sometimes tempted to injustice. She was always a little afraid of 'clever' women;

and a reputation for superior intelligence was no recommendation in her eyes. She liked the ladies about her to have extremely good manners and a pretty presence, but she shrank away from any woman who, she feared, was 'going to be clever.' It had been very early instilled into her that it was man's province to be clever, and that it was much best for woman not to intrude into it.

The men with whom she had been principally brought into contact at the beginning of her reign had not been remarkable as a group for their mental cultivation. There seems to be no doubt at all that the 'man of the world' of fifty years ago was in every respect a more ignorant being than he would be if he flourished to-day. Not merely did he not know much, but it was a point of honour with him to conceal what little he did know. The wives and daughters of these noblemen surrounded the young Queen, and impressed upon her the idea of what English women ought to be. In the course of time, Prince Albert appeared upon the scene, with his head full of the precepts of Count Stockmar, his store of German culture, and his genuine taste for science and philosophy. The

Queen was partially converted to the Prince Consort's views; not merely was she proud of his attainments, but she admitted to herself that it was proper that there should be cultivated and learned men, who should walk in line with the Prince. But, as regards women, she retained her preconceived ideal. She would certainly never have allowed that every action of theirs could be analysed under one of three categories, as it was said that Stockmar had persuaded Prince Albert to believe.

Much must, however, be left to conjecture when we speak of the formation of the Queen's character at that early date, as there are few survivors among us to consult, and as the memoir-writers of those years scarcely thought of preserving the intimate and homely details which would now be so invaluable. Old court circulars and lists of the *personnel* of the court indicate, however, that then, as now, the court consisted of eight ladies of the bedchamber, simply styled ladies-in-waiting, eight maids of honour, eight equerries, the Prince Consort's private secretary, and the privy purse. Other special posts were filled by other occupants, when they were required, at Windsor or in Lon-

don. From 1854 onwards, for the next fifteen or twenty years, we meet with names such as those of Lady Canning, Lady Macdonald, Lady Jocelyn, the Duchess of Athole, and Lady Mount Edgcumbe. Each of these remarkable women left a vivid impress on the daily life of the Queen. The extraordinary courage and strength of purpose of Lady Canning, exhibited as they were through the Indian Mutiny and afterwards, are matter of history. In Lady Macdonald there existed a love of literature and language which Prince Albert greatly admired, and which he commended to the notice of the Queen. But it was Lady Jocelyn, brilliant and witty—the most beautiful woman of her day, and doomed to close her life as the most unhappy—who was more uniformly fortunate than any other of the Queen's early companions in sustaining that spirit of artless gaiety and sparkling good manners in which Her Majesty delighted.

The influence of the Duchess of Athole upon the Queen was unique. No one, perhaps, ever charmed her Royal mistress so completely. The Duchess was a romantic being, who seemed to be transferred to life straight from the pages of one of

the Waverley novels. She was, before she came to Windsor, and whenever she was back at home in the north, the type of a Scottish chieftainess. Her purpose was inflexible, her sense of humour broad and full, her will that of a woman who was born to rule, and who knew it. Full of kindliness to those who acknowledged her sway, but quick to resent and to resist the slightest encroachment, the smallest slight to her pride, the Duchess of Athole seemed created by nature to fail at court and fling over the traces of its discipline. But her brain was full of wild Celtic romance, and this was fortunately centred, with an intense devotion, upon the person of Queen Victoria. Whatever homage she would have demanded from others for herself, whatever claims her fierce pride made on the allegiance of her clan, the Duchess was only too happy to lavish on the Queen. She was not conventional, and she laid herself out to persuade the Queen to share her breezy love of outdoor life. The result on the Queen was a further appreciation of scenery, and of the landscape-painters whom the Duchess would sometimes bring in her train from Dunkeld.

In slightly later times women scarcely less remarkable than these, and in some cases still more intimately bound up in the Queen's private life, took the place of the older ladies. Lady Mount Edgcumbe, whose musical talents were a ceaseless source of delight to the Queen, formed a link between the older generation and those who, like Lady Ely, with her tireless devotion, and Lady Churchill, whose life closed but a few days before that of her Royal mistress, succeeded them in their duties and their privileges. Although the gentlemen-in-waiting did not occupy so much of her time, there were several, such as the present Duke of Grafton, Lord de Roos, Lord Hertford, and General Hardinge, who were counted among the Queen's real friends for life.

The maids of honour were never reckoned in court esteem as quite so high in consideration as the ladies-in-waiting. Some among them, however, as particularly Miss Phipps, continued to serve the Queen as secretaries to the end; and two, Lady Biddulph and Lady Ponsonby, as wives of successive keepers of the privy purse, shared with their husbands the privilege of attending the

Queen wherever she went. None of these whom we have mentioned could be called dull or commonplace women. Each had some peculiar strength or charm of temperament; and it might be supposed that each would exercise some direct influence upon the Queen's character. But it is more than doubtful whether they can be said to have done so. Queen Victoria was curiously independent of her attendant ladies. She valued them, she appreciated their qualities, she leaned on their devotion; but she was never under their influence. She accepted their services in a dispassionate, professional way, and she ever, by preserving a quiet tone of decorum, checked any exaggerated expression of personal affection the moment that it was threatened.

The Queen, full of warmth and human tenderness as she was, and surrounded all her life by persons deeply devoted to her, to whom she was deeply attached, was singularly without what could truly be called friends. The atmosphere of her life was too much charged with formality to allow of what could deserve the name of a deep personal friendship between herself and any of her subjects.

No one, it was made apparent, was ever quite necessary to her; the indispensable person did not exist. Lady Canning used to warn enthusiastic novices of the danger of cultivating any illusion on this point. She would say, 'You will be delighted with your waiting at Balmoral or at Osborne. You will see the Queen intimately, riding, dancing, playing, dining. You will think she cannot get on without you. And then you will come back one day to Windsor, and somebody else will take your place, and you will have become—a number on the list.' Undoubtedly, in her ripe wisdom, the Queen encouraged this. She desired above all things to keep the society immediately around her person on a serene and even footing. There must not be the least approach to favouritism; and she would check herself first of all if she discovered a tendency in her own manner to encourage one person at the expense of another. But, in truth, her engrained professional habit made her free of all her ladies.

It is matter of ancient history that in 1839 the Queen waged a determined battle with Sir Robert Peel on the subject of the appointment of her bed-

chamber women. He offered his resignation, and she accepted it without the least compunction. It is not so well known that she failed in her second and parallel controversy, about her private secretary. No Government would hear of creating any such appointment, and the post continued to be officially unrecognised until the very close of her reign. It was none the less powerful, however, for being unofficial. In Baron Stockmar's letters to the Prince Consort, he acutely points out how the Prince may best serve the Queen, by acting as her private secretary. He tried to do this, with the help of G. E. Anson; of course the result was that the unseen man, of professional knowledge and habits, became the moving spirit. It continued to be so after the Prince's death. If any one doubts this, let him turn to the Queen's letter on the disestablishment of the Irish Church, in the 'Life of Archbishop Tait.' Can any one fail to detect, in the liberal accent with which the Queen deprecates the rejection of the Bill, that there is more of General Grey in this letter than the mere shaping of the draft?

It came about in this way, unofficially, and as it

were, unconsciously, that after the death of the Prince Consort the Queen gradually found herself at the head of a little staff of confidential officers. These consisted originally of General Grey, and then of General Ponsonby, as private secretary, with Sir Charles Phipps originally, and then Sir Thomas Biddulph, as the keeper of the privy purse. Eventually there was an arrangement by which Sir Henry Ponsonby combined the two offices, with the aid of two assistants. Still later, there was a return to the original arrangement; and Sir Arthur Bigge was private secretary, and Sir Fleetwood Edwards keeper of the privy purse, to the end. This staff, never officially acknowledged in the fulness of its functions, had to exercise the most complete self-effacement, and became, in effect, an expansion of the Queen's personal power in action. The watchword of the lives of her private secretaries was devotion to the will of the Queen. The secret of the power they exercised was faithfully kept from the public, and will always be kept. These men gave their lives to her service, without demur or reserve, and it is as much to her honour

as it is to theirs that she inspired such complete devotion in men of such remarkable gifts.

The duties of the private secretaries included not merely communication, on the Queen's behalf, with the principal Departments of the Government, but the reading through of all the despatches, and the digestion for the Queen's use of all documents—the keeping watch, in short, upon everything of public importance which went on in and out of Parliament, and the scheduling it so as to save the Queen's time as much as possible when it became necessary for her to form a decision. Not till many years have passed by will the real work of the private secretaries be fully known, but history is sure to confirm the verdict that, whatever their duties may ultimately prove to have been, they carried them out with complete self-effacement.

In this delicate and responsible position, it was the Queen's constant wish that the private secretaries should never allow their own political feelings to be discoverable. They had to consent to belong to no particular party, to suffer, in fact, political disfranchisement. This, with the utmost

sagacity, they always contrived to do; and ministers of every complexion have acknowledged the impartiality of the private secretaries. Lord Beaconsfield said to a political friend, 'I believe that General Ponsonby used to be a Whig, but, whatever his politics may once have been, I can only say that I could not wish my case stated to the Queen better than the private secretary does it. Perhaps I am a gainer by his Whiggishness, as it makes him more scrupulously on his guard to be always absolutely fair and lucid.' The tributes of Mr. Gladstone were not less explicit. It is greatly to the credit of the private secretaries, who came nearer to the mind of Her Majesty than any other persons, that they never forget to efface their own views and wishes in her sovereign will. She exercised that will with complete independence; and, from the death of the Prince Consort onwards, if she ever found any of her gentlemen issuing an order without her cognisance, she did not fail to make her displeasure felt.

Throughout periods of crisis nothing could equal the firmness with which the Queen supported the decisions of her ministers. This was

peculiarly the case during the South African War, when her loyalty to the Government never flagged for a moment. That she regretted that she had not seen the end of the war was true, but that she wished it to be prematurely stopped, or stopped by weak concessions, is absolutely untrue. A story has been circulated by some interested persons to the effect that, in her last words to the Prince of Wales, she ordered him to 'stop the war.' This is a sacrilegious falsehood, to which it is proper that the most direct denial should be given. Such inventions do real mischief, and distort the popular conception of the Queen's character. Having decided as head of the Army that war with a foreign nation was necessary, the Queen never drew back. She had a soldierly feeling which supported her throughout, and weak remorse was never one of her failings. The kindly and humane expressions which she used in individual cases could only by wilful violence be distorted into an appearance of disloyal opposition to her ministers in regard to a national question of vital import.

At the same time, the Queen was less ready to

yield to ministerial dictation than is commonly supposed. She did not admit it at the time, but she allowed it afterwards to be felt, that if she had made up her mind on a question of principle, she would not yield without a struggle. Of her relations with various Governments much has come to light which it would be otiose to repeat here. Less is known of her intercourse with Lord Clarendon, whom she liked, although she was a little intimidated by his sarcasm and his bright, free speech. She had a certain *nuance* of dislike in her relations with Lord Palmerston; she thought him a *roué,* and his jauntiness was not to her taste. The rebuff she once administered to him, as Foreign Secretary, is matter of history. Lord Granville was excessively fortunate in all his dealings with the Queen. A finished actor and a finished man of the world, he contrived in all conditions to maintain exactly the correct tone. The remarkable gifts of this astute statesman never appeared to such brilliant advantage as during his interviews with the Queen, whom he exhilarated with his gaiety and sprightly wit. Of Lord John Russell she said amusingly that he would be better

company if he had a third subject; for he was interested in nothing except the Constitution of 1688 and—himself. She esteemed Lord Derby, but she considered him a little boisterous. On Lord Aberdeen she placed a deep reliance; he was easy and explanatory in his official dealings with her, and in his somewhat grim fashion he always contrived to make his interviews pleasant to her. For Lord Grey (then Lord Howick) she had an indulgent appreciation, although she once described him as 'the only person who has ever flatly contradicted me at my own table.'

None of these statesmen, however, approached the remarkable ascendency which Disraeli exercised over the Queen. No one, it is certain, ever amused her so much as he did. After she had overcome the first instinctive apprehension of his eccentricity, she subsided into a rare confidence in his judgment. She grew to believe that on almost all subjects he knew best. With his insinuating graces, his iron hand under the velvet glove, his reckless disregard of court etiquette, Disraeli was almost the exact opposite of Lord Granville; but from him the Queen bore what she certainly would

have resented from almost anyone else. He was never in the least shy; he did not trouble to insinuate; he said what he meant in terms the most surprising, the most unconventional; and the Queen thought that she had never in her life seen so amusing a person. He gratified her by his bold assumptions of her knowledge, she excused his florid adulation on the ground that it was 'oriental,' and she was pleased with the audacious way in which he broke through the ice that surrounded her. He would ask across the dinner-table, 'Madam, did Lord Melbourne ever tell your Majesty that you were not to do' this or that? and the Queen would take it as the best of jokes. Those who were present at dinner when Disraeli suddenly proposed the Queen's health as Empress of India, with a little speech as flowery as the oration of a maharajah, used to describe the pretty smiling bow, half a curtsey, which the Queen made him as he sat down. She loved the East, with all its pageantry and all its trappings, and she accepted Disraeli as a picturesque image of it. It is still remembered how much more she used

to smile in conversation with him than she did with any other of her ministers.

That the Queen preferred Scotland to any other country is well known. In the sincere and artless 'Journals,' extracts from which she was induced to publish, this delight in the Highlands glows on every page. It was always remarked by those around her that her spirits steadily rose as the time approached for her journey to Balmoral, and that when she actually started she was as eager as a child on a holiday. The total absence of restraint, and the comparative removal of responsibility, acted most pleasantly on her spirits, and to those whose duty it was to serve her she was never perhaps so completely charming, so easy to satisfy, so warmly genial, as when she was driving and sketching and drinking tea on the remote Aberdeenshire moors. In Scotland, too, she even laid aside something of her decisiveness. She would indulge, in little things, in the luxury of not quite knowing her own mind, and was even in some matters under the domination of favorite and trusted domestics. She had the peculiarity of never being sure which road it was best to take,

or what garment to wear; and her drives became, on this account, prolonged agonies of indecision.

Bound up with this love of the Highlands was the Queen's romantic passion for her Stuart ancestors, mainly seen through an atmosphere of the romances of Sir Walter Scott. It became difficult to decide whether she liked Aberdeenshire because it reminded her of the tartan heroes, or whether much wandering over the braes brought the lives of the Jacobites home to her. One of the Queen's strongest traits was her partiality for the Stuarts; she forgave them all their faults. She used to say, 'I am far more proud of my Stuart than of my Hanoverian ancestors;' and of the latter, indeed, she very seldom spoke. She once reproved one of her gentlemen rather sharply for condoning the acts of the Butcher. She drew herself up and remarked, 'I do not like to hear the Duke of Cumberland praised: he was a shocking man,' not wholly on account of his action after Culloden, but also because of her fondness for the romantic prince, whom she would never allow any one in her presence to style the Pretender. She cultivated a deep and almost superstitious admiration for Charles I,

who was never anything less than 'the Royal Martyr' in her eyes. All the objects which had belonged to that family, which she could gather together, she preserved with the greatest veneration; and it is recalled that when she visited the late Lord Ashburnham's collection of Stuart relics, the Queen was quite overcome with emotion. No disparaging remarks were ever permitted in her presence, even with regard to James II. It is very amusing that she never seems to have been willing to admit that the success of either Pretender would have been fatal to herself. If some stickler for historical accuracy suggested the delicacy of the situation, the Queen would say: 'The Stuarts pretenders? Because of me? There is no question of *me*. You can't argue about that. But I'm talking of *them*.' She adored Mary Stuart, and had a proportionate dislike for Queen Elizabeth. Dean Stanley used to say that this last prejudice was unjust, because she was herself so very much like that sovereign in character. 'When she faces you down with her "It must be," ' he declared, "I don't know whether it is Victoria or Elizabeth who is speaking!'

The Queen greatly enjoyed her visits to foreign countries, and particularly those to Italy. When she stayed in Florence, she was eager to see every beautiful corner of the city, and to visit all the interesting churches. The difficulty which attended the inspection of the miraculous picture in the Annunziata added a peculiar zest to the permission which she ultimately received. The Queen was indirectly, but not the less deeply, influenced by the beauty and antiquity of her surroundings in Italy. It was the home of the music that she loved best; it represented the romance of art to her. She was extraordinarily interested in the system of the Misericordia, and quite put out by the success of her ladies and gentlemen-in-waiting, who brought back news of having met the processions on their merciful errand. At last, by dint of driving about and loitering in likely places, the long-wished-for meeting was effected. The Queen hastened home to report her good fortune to her ladies: 'And the poor man was really *dead*,' she exulted, 'not merely wounded, like yours!' She had tender scruples as to whether she ought to be drawn about the churches in her bath chair; 'I

should hate them to think I was irreverent,' she said. She was indefatigable in her choice of fresh views to rest before and admire, when she camped out for tea in Italy or France. In old days, as in the Highlands, she would sketch during these expeditions; but of late she had not attempted this.

The Queen had a great affection for the Italian language, and spoke it easily, though not as she spoke French. She gave herself quaint practice in this accomplishment. Never did an organ-grinder make his appearance near Osborne but, if the carriage met him, it had to be stopped, while the Queen conversed in Italian with the grinning musician, and enquired after the health of his monkey. She liked to hear the sound of the language, even in its least classic form; and Neapolitan singers in the street were quite irresistible to her. Something about the whole character of the Celtic and Latin races was sympathetic to her; she felt at home with their turns of temperament. She desired, almost passionately, to be loved by the Irish; and when she went to Dublin in 1899 she believed that they did love her. She felt the stimulus of success in pleasing, but she acknowledged

that the work required of her was twice as great as it had been on her earlier visit. She did her very best to win the affection of the Irish, but the effort fatigued her much. She was carried through it all by her enjoyment of the wit and gaiety of the crowd. She kept on saying, 'How I delight in the Irish!'

In closing this brief study of one of the most remarkable personalities of the nineteenth century, a few words must not be omitted dealing with the Queen's attitude towards her own regal position. No one ever accepted her fate with a graver or more complete conviction. It is possible that if her signature had been required to a declaration, on paper, of her belief in the divine right of kings, she would have thought it prudent to refuse to sign; but in her own heart she never questioned that she was the anointed of the Lord, called by the most solemn warrant to rule a great nation in the fear of God. She was fond of the word 'loyalty,' but she used it in a sense less lax than that which it bears in the idle parlance of the day. When the Queen spoke of her subjects as 'loyal,' she meant it in the mediæval sense. The relation

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was not, in her eyes, voluntary or sentimental, but imperative. If she had been a wicked or a foolish woman, it would have been very sad; but the duty of obedience would, in her idea, have been the same. Subject must be 'loyal;' if they loved their sovereign, so much the better for them and for her, but affection was not essential. In her phraseology this constantly peeped out—'I, the Queen,' '*my* people,' '*my* soldiers.' She regarded herself, professionally, as the pivot round which the whole machine of state revolves. This sense, this perhaps even chimerical conviction of her own indispensability, greatly helped to keep her on her lofty plane of daily, untiring duty. And gradually she hypnotised the public imagination, so that at last, in defiance of the theories of historic philosophers, the nation accepted the Queen's view of her own functions, and tacitly concluded with her that she ruled, a consecrated monarch, by Right Divine.

THE END.

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